

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO INS WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 014718

FOR MR DON YOUNG

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM KUALA LUMPUR DATED JANUARY 17,
1978 SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BANGKOK, CANBERRA, HONG KONG,
JAKARTA, MANILA IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 0424

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF VN

SUBJECT: REPORTED DROWNING OF VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGEES

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 0339

1. AS INDICATED PARA 4, REFTTEL, EMBASSY REFUGEE OFFICER
HAS INVESTIGATED CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING SINKING OF
VIETNAMESE REFUGEE BOAT AND REPORTED DROWNING OF NINE REFUGEES.

2. BOAT FIRST LANDED ON MALAYSIAN COAST NIGHT OF 7 JANUARY
36 MILES NORTH OF TRENGGANU. LOCAL AUTHORITIES INNOCULATED
15 PEOPLE ABOARD FOR SMALLPOX, FURNISHED PROVISIONS AND TOLD
THEM TO LEAVE. BOAT LANDED AT TRENGGANU ON 10 JANUARY.

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PAGE 02 STATE 014718

POLICE ORDERED BOAT TO LEAVE. REFUGEES RESPONDED THAT THEY
HAD NO FOOD OR WATER AND BOATS ENGINE INOPERABLE. BOAT
ALLOWED TO ANCHOR IN ESTUARY CLOSE TO LOCAL MARKET. BOAT
REMAINED AT ANCHOR THROUGH 11 JANUARY. POLICE RECORDED
NAMES OF REFUGEES AND GAVE FOOD AND MILK TO REFUGEES.
IN EARLY HOURS OF JANUARY 12 A VOILENT STORM AROSE
WHICH SNAPPED ANCHOR CABLE AND BLEW BOAT INTO MIDDLE

OF RIVER WHERE IT BROKE UP AND SANK. NINE REFUGEES
DROWNED. SIX SURVIVORS GIVEN IMMEDIATE CARE BY POLICE.
BODIES RECOVERED FOLLOWING DAY AND GIVEN DECENT BURIAL.
SURVIVORS GIVEN CLOTHES AND MOVE TO PULAU BESAR
REFUGEE CAMP.

3. SURVIVOR WHO RELATED ABOVE FACTS TO REFUGEE OFFICER
ASKED THAT CHIEF OF POLICE BE THANKED FOR HIS KINDNESS. SIX
SURVIVORS BEING INTERVIEWED BY INS FOR ENTRY AS CAT IV
REFUGEES UNDER IPP-77.

4. COMMENT. REFUGEE OFFICER REPORTS IT APPEARS THAT
REFUGEES WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO LAND.
FIRST REPORTS OF INCIDENT AS RELAYED REFTEL GAVE RISE TO
SUSPICION THAT DROWNINGS WERE DUE TO REJECTION OF BOAT,
BUT THIS APPARENTLY WAS NOT THE CASE. THERE ARE CONTINU-
ING REPORTS THAT MALAYSIANS HAVE TURNED AWAY SOME
SEAWORTHY BOATS, AND THEY CLEARLY PREFER THAT REFUGEES
GO ELSEWHERE. THEY NEVERTHELESS CONTINUE TO ACCEPT REFUGEES,
PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO CANNOT GO ON, AND TO TREAT THEM
HUMANELY.
MILLER UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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